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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3586  
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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6842  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4558  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3197  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7701  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1782  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5117  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1320  
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INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7444

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Asad Re-election, International Tribunal, Syria/UK,  
Syria/Brazil, Syria/Iran (5/31)

**¶1.** Summary: On May 31 Syrian papers featured a statement by a Syrian Foreign Ministry source commenting on the US State Department spokesman's reaction to the Syrian popular consensus on renewing President Asad's term as president of the Syrian Arab Republic. The statement expressed surprise that the US State Department spokesman was unable to see what happened in Syria; namely, the national and popular consensus on the leadership of President Asad and the sincere expression of Syrian national unity showed by Syrians at home and abroad. The source regretted that the political language of the US State Department has sunk low. "I advise these people to keep their comments to themselves, to refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of others, and to turn their attention toward solutions to the problems that they created for their country, such as the wrong war in Iraq and elsewhere in the world," the source said. The source wondered if the democracy they accept is only the democracy that produces people they approve of or that leads to the adoption of positions and decisions that are far from the interests of their peoples.

Papers also quoted a Syrian media source saying on May 30 that there is no change in Syria's position towards the International Tribunal for Lebanon. The source told Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) that establishing this court under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter goes against Lebanon's sovereignty and might lead to more deterioration in the situation in Lebanon."

Papers also reported President Asad's meeting on May 30 with a group of British MPs focusing on the latest developments in Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon, in addition to terrorism and the fight against it. Talks also dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the necessity of achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on UN resolutions which guarantee the restoration of rights. Members of the British Parliament group underlined Syria's pivotal role in the region, referring to the importance of continuing dialogue and contacts with Syria and the importance of stability in Syria and the region.

On Syrian-Brazilian relations, papers reported President Asad's meeting on May 30 with Ricardo Berzoini, Chairman of the Brazilian Labor Party. Talks dealt with bilateral relations and ways of boosting them, in addition to the ties between the Brazilian labor

party and the Baath party.

End of summary.

#### 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad reviews regional developments and mutual cooperation with two British and Brazilian delegations. Focus is on achieving peace, combating terrorism and continuing dialogue" Government-owned Tishreen, 5/31)

"A Foreign Ministry source expresses surprise over the US spokesman's inability to see what happened in Syria [the national popular consensus on President Asad's leadership]. Syrian Foreign Minister advises America to keep its comments to itself and to mind its own business" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/31)

"A UNSC resolution on the International Tribunal is endorsed at the UN in an unprecedented act in international law that violates Lebanon's sovereignty. Representatives of the Arab, Islamic and non-aligned countries, Russia and China abstain" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/31)

"A Syrian media source: No change in Syria's position on the International Tribunal" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/31)

"Russian Foreign Minister: The US destabilizes security in Lebanon. The Lebanese Opposition supports President Lahoud's initiative on a national salvation government" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/31)

"Ministry of Foreign Affairs feels sorry for the low level of US discourse (Independent al Watan, 5/31)

"Iranian FM Manoushaher Motakki to arrive in Damascus today and is due to hold a number of meetings with Syrian officials including

President Asad" (Independent al-Watan, 5/31)

#### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Syria Congratulates Itself"

Abdul-Fattah al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/31): "The support that the Syrian people spontaneously and honestly expressed for President Asad sends a clear message to all those who wagered on their ability to harm the stability and impregnability of the beautiful Syrian homeland. All those concerned are supposed to have received the message that the people believe in their president's choices and trust his wisdom, and that they will always support him against anything that harms Syria's sovereignty and dignity, whether through international resolutions and tribunals or through any other form of pressure...."

"Syrians now need to translate their 'yes' to President Asad into actions to develop the country.... In this new stage, reforms need to be given a new impetus. If Syria is proud that it overcame a period of difficult foreign pressure, everybody realizes that this would not have been possible without the package of domestic reforms that helped strengthen and fortify the Syrian homeland. Now the conviction remains the same: further foreign pressure can only be confronted through further reforms...."

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"Seven Bad Years, Seven Good Years"

Dr. Mahdi Dakhllallah, former Information Minister, commented in government-owned Tishreen, on (5/31): "While the past seven years were generally bad for Arabs, as they witnessed the occupation of Iraq, troubles in Lebanon and Palestine, and rifts among Arabs, they were also good in many aspects thanks to the positions and achievements of Syria and the Arab resistance, which are supported

by millions of Arabs from the Gulf to the Ocean....

"Syria's position against hegemonic plans amid unprecedented conditions was astonishing.... Syria achieved qualitative changes in the development process despite siege, boycott, threats, and sanctions.... It also enhanced political vitality in the Syrian life, liberalized the economy, developed education, and consolidated independence of decision under tough regional and international political circumstances....

"In the past seven years, the Lebanese resistance achieved two unprecedented victories while the Palestinians achieved the first military victory in Gaza....

"The steadfastness and defiance shown by Syria, the resistance forces, and the Arab peoples, have made all of us feel that victory is possible. The next seven years, therefore, must also be good years, with their victories topped by the liberation of the Golan, which has been in captivity for a long time...."

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"A Political [Screen] for a Season of Aggressions"

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Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/31): "The political activity in Israel following the report of the Winograd Commission does not suggest that Israel is interested in any peaceful political effort.... Rather, it is interested in ways to address the defeat of its military establishment and repair the damage caused to it by the national Lebanese resistance. This opens the doors to a summer that might be hot if the international circumstances conform to Israel's

premeditated hostile intentions...."

Corbin